Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan Fact Sheet

What is the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan?

The Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan documents the efforts of concerned stakeholders to identify, understand, and address the water quality and related problems facing Coffee Creek and its watershed. The plan contains a detailed description of the watershed's natural features, an evaluation of the watershed's water quality problems, a prioritized list of stakeholders' goals for the water quality in the watershed, and a comprehensive action plan to achieve those goals. This fact sheet summarizes the plan and its development. The complete plan can be downloaded from http://www.coffeecreekwc.org/ccwc/ccwcmission/319_grant.htm .

How did development of the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan begin?

Area residents and other watershed stakeholders have long recognized the value of Coffee Creek. The plan grew out of concerns voiced by the Coffee Creek Watershed Conservancy (CCWC) and other stakeholders over how to best protect and manage this valuable community resource. To address these concerns and focus management efforts, the CCWC applied for and received Clean Water Act Section 319 funding from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to create a watershed management plan. With assistance from the consulting firm JFNew and many active stakeholders, the CCWC directed the development of the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan.

How did development of the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan progress?

The CCWC utilized a three step process to guide development of the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan. The three steps included identifying problems, developing a watershed vision, and creating a mission statement.

Problem Identification

During the development of the plan, watershed stakeholders and JFNew identified a variety of concerns by interviewing stakeholders and representatives of the natural resource agencies; reviewing existing scientific literature; assessing the water chemistry, biological community, and habitat of Coffee Creek and its major tributaries; and modeling potential pollutant loading rates to Coffee Creek and its major tributaries. The results of this work are detailed in the plan but can be summarized by the following statement:

Problem Statement: *Coffee Creek does not support the community's desired uses of providing a healthy habitat for the creek's biota and an attractive resource for citizens.*

Vision Development

Watershed stakeholders' perception of Coffee Creek outlined in the problem statement was not the same as what they wanted Coffee Creek to be. Stakeholders envisioned another condition for the creek that is summarized in their vision statement. This vision statement forms the foundation of the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan and directs all management action outlined in the plan.

The vision: *Coffee Creek supports a healthy cold water biological community and provides an attractive natural resource for citizens to enjoy.*

Mission Statement Creation

To ensure everyone is working toward the same vision, the stakeholders developed a guiding mission statement.

The mission: *The Coffee Creek Watershed Community is a coalition of existing conservation groups and concerned citizens dedicated to developing and implementing a successful watershed plan to protect, maintain, and enhance Coffee Creek and its inhabitants.*

What did CCWC find during the development of the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan?

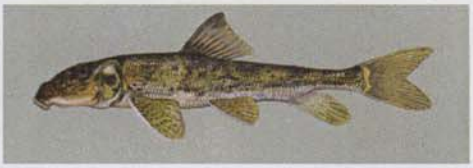
- Historically close to 95% of the watershed was forested; today, approximately 40% of the watershed is forested. More forested land covers the upper portion of the watershed compared to the lower portion of the watershed.
- The watershed supports a number of endangered, threatened, and rare species and special habitats. Most of these species and habitats occupy areas in the upper portion of the watershed.
- In general, Coffee Creek exhibited relatively good water quality compared to many streams in the Little Calumet River watershed and throughout Indiana.
- Water quality, biological integrity, and habitat conditions were generally better in the Coffee Creek mainstem compared to conditions in its tributaries.
- Coffee Creek at Coffee Creek Center generally exhibited the best water quality, biological integrity, and habitat conditions.
- Pope O'Connor Ditch and Shooter Ditch were the tributaries exhibiting the poorest water quality, biological integrity, and habitat conditions.
- Watershed modeling showed that the Pope O'Connor Ditch and Shooter Ditch subwatersheds possessed the potential to contribute the greatest amount of pollutants to Coffee Creek.

How will the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan be implemented?

The Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan will be implemented by achieving each of the goals established and prioritized by the Coffee Creek watershed stakeholders. The full watershed management plan outlines specific actions watershed stakeholders will implement to achieve these goals. Abbreviated versions of the eight goals are listed below.

Goal 1: We want to hire a watershed coordinator to assist in implementing the watershed management plan.

Goal 2: We want to establish/encourage permanently protected, vegetated streamside buffers along Coffee Creek and its tributaries.



Goal 3: We want to encourage the conservation, management, and improvement of existing forested land in the upper portion of the watershed.

Goal 4: We want to educate/inform stakeholders of the value of Coffee Creek and ways to protect its water quality and aquatic life.

Goal 5: In two years, we want to have a better understanding of the processes involved in identifying the sources of *E. coli* (i.e. failing septic systems, wildlife, domestic pets, etc.) and we want to educate watershed stakeholders on management techniques available to reduce pathogenic contamination of Coffee Creek and its tributaries.

Goal 6: We want to document the contribution (loads) of sediment, nutrients, and bacteria from the surface and subsurface drains that discharge to Coffee Creek and its tributaries by the end of 2006.

Goal 7: In ten years, we want to reduce the amount of sediment reaching Coffee Creek via the Pope O'Connor Ditch by 65% and the amount of nutrients reaching Coffee Creek via the Pope O'Connor Ditch by 40%.

Goal 8: In ten years, we want to reduce the amount of sediment reaching Coffee Creek via Shooter Ditch by 65% and the amount of nutrients reaching Coffee Creek via Shooter Ditch by 40%.

What you can do to help?

Your help is needed to implement the Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan. Volunteers are needed to conduct water quality and biological monitoring; research techniques to improve water quality; create, publish, and distribute educational newsletters; or simply assist with general office tasks. To volunteer your services please contact:

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